



BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 665

RIN 0648-XE284

**Pacific Island Pelagic Fisheries; 2016 U.S. Territorial
Longline Bigeye Tuna Catch Limits for the Commonwealth of
the Northern Mariana Islands**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of a valid specified fishing agreement.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a valid specified fishing agreement that allocates up to 1,000 metric tons of the 2016 bigeye tuna limit for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to identified U.S. longline fishing vessels. The agreement supports the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific Islands, and fisheries development in the CNMI.

DATES: *[insert date of filing for public inspection at the Office of the FEDERAL REGISTER]*.

ADDRESSES: Copies of a 2015 environmental assessment (EA), a 2016 supplemental EA (2016 SEA), and a finding of no significant impact, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2015-0140, are

available from *www.regulations.gov*, or from Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

Copies of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region (Pelagic FEP) are available from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808-522-8220, fax 808-522-8226, or *www.wpcouncil.org*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jarad Makaiau, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808-725-5176.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a final rule published on September 14, 2016, NMFS specified a 2016 limit of 2,000 metric tons (mt) of longline-caught bigeye tuna for the U.S. Pacific Island territories of American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI (81 FR 63145). Of the 2,000 mt limit, NMFS allows each territory to allocate up to 1,000 mt to U.S. longline fishing vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement.

On September 9, 2016, NMFS received from the Council, a specified fishing agreement between the CNMI and Quota Management, Inc. (QMI). In the transmittal memorandum, the Council's Executive Director advised that the specified

fishing agreement was consistent with the criteria set forth in 50 CFR 665.819(c)(1). NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it is consistent with the Pelagic FEP, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c)(9), vessels identified in the agreement may retain and land bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean under the CNMI limit.

NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught by vessels identified in the agreement to the CNMI starting on September 9, 2016. If NMFS determines the fishery will reach the 1,000 mt attribution limit, we would restrict the retention of bigeye tuna caught by vessels identified in the agreement.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 15, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2016-22619 Filed: 9/16/2016 11:15 am; Publication Date: 9/20/2016]